



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## KOREAN WAR VETERANS' ADVOCATE TO VISIT SD KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL

On Tuesday, May 29, at 10 a.m. CDT, Hannah Y. Kim will visit South Dakota's Korean War Memorial at Capitol Lake in Pierre and present a commemorative wreath.

Pierre American Legion Post 8 will present the colors for the ceremony.

Her visit is part of a three-month journey, visiting Korean War memorials in all 50 states, to honor and remember those who served in the Korean War.

Hannah hopes her journey will raise awareness about the Wall of Remembrance, the addition to the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The Wall was approved by Congress in 2016, but lack of funding has delayed its construction for two years. As a result, the names of the nearly 37,000 Americans who died during the Korean War are still waiting to be inscribed for posterity.

Hannah's activism on behalf of Korean War Veterans began in 2008, when she was a 24-year-old graduate student in Washington, D.C., and established Remember727, an organization dedicated to honoring veterans of the so-called "Forgotten War." Hannah lobbied Congress to enact legislation, signed by President Obama in 2009, that established July 27 as National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day.

She subsequently worked for Congressman Charles B. Rangel, a decorated Korean War Veteran, as his communication director and later as his chief of staff. When Congressman Rangel retired in 2017, Hannah embarked on a journey around the world, visiting every country that was part of the UN effort during the Korean War. She interviewed 200 veterans to memorialize their stories, because as she told them, "If you hadn't fought in Korea, I wouldn't be here."



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# VA EXPANDS TELEHEALTH

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a new federal rule that will allow VA doctors, nurses and other health-care providers to administer care to Veterans using [telehealth](#), or virtual technology, regardless of where in the United States the provider or Veteran is located, including when care will occur across state lines or outside a VA facility.

Previously, it was unclear whether VA providers could furnish care to Veterans in other states through telehealth because of licensing restrictions or state-specific telehealth laws. This new rule exercises federal preemption to override those state restrictions, paving the way for VA to expand care to Veterans using telehealth. VA worked closely with the White House Office of American Innovation and the Department of Justice for implementation of the new rule.

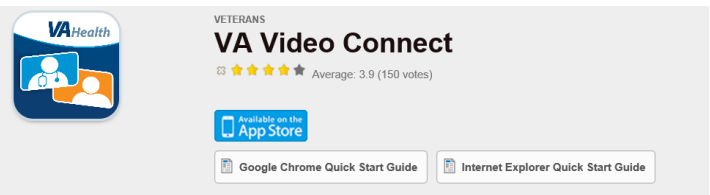
“This new rule is critical to VA’s ‘Anywhere to Anywhere’ initiative,” said VA Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Now that the rule has been finalized, VA providers and patients can start enjoying the full benefits of VA’s telehealth services.”

By enabling veterans nationwide to receive care at home, the rule will especially benefit veterans living in rural areas who would otherwise need to travel a considerable distance or across state lines to receive care. The rule also will expand veterans’ access to critical care that can be provided virtually — such as mental health care and suicide prevention — by allowing quicker and easier access to VA mental health providers through telehealth.

VA first announced the proposed rule, titled “Authority of Health Care Providers to Practice Telehealth,” at a White House event last August, during which VA and President Donald Trump launched the “Anywhere to Anywhere” initiative.

In the announcement, the VA also unveiled [VA Video Connect](#), a video conferencing app for veterans and VA providers. Through this new rule, VA providers will be able to use VA Video Connect and other forms of telehealth to furnish care to veterans anywhere in the country, including in the veteran’s home.

To learn more about VA’s telehealth “Anywhere to Anywhere” initiative, visit VA’s Office of Connected Care at [connectedcare.va.gov](https://connectedcare.va.gov).



# MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN

When we hear the word “operation,” we think hospital, emergency, illness, surgery, treatment, and procedure. However, with over 33 years in the military the word “operation” affords me a completely different meaning. For decades, the military has issued random code names for exercises, attack plans and other operations. Operations were used to resolve conflict, promote peace, and support civilian leaders in response to domestic crises.

In the 70’s while on Army active duty training in Europe, there was Operation Reforger, and every year while at SDNG Golden Coyote training there were many different operations based on the humanitarian mission we were carrying out. My tour in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan had numerous humanitarian operations, including Operation Qala-i-Wali Air Assault.

I have lived with operations and missions throughout most of my life. Some were assigned to me as a part of a military mission, and some I developed to enhance information exchange and to increase outreach for the Department.

During my six years leading the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, I carried that operational mindset with me. A key part of building momentum is education, raising awareness, and inspiring action. Although much of the focus of our operations was on veterans, it also afforded us the opportunity to educate the masses that may not have served.

Our Department operations included Reaching All Veterans (RAV), Ketchup, Korean, Taiwan, Saigon, Whirlwind and Calling All Returning Servicemembers (CARS). Although each was conducted with its own mission and time frame, they all afforded us the opportunity to reach out to our veterans and to thank them for their service, educate them on the benefits, services and programs available to them. They also provided us a great opportunity to educate civilians on the important role these heroes played in protecting our freedoms.

Our veterans have shouldered the burden of our defense. They display extraordinary strength and resilience in the face of adversity to protect the freedoms we, as Americans, enjoy daily. They remain disciplined, dedicated, and trained Americans with a wealth of knowledge, skills, and experience. When our men and women return home after years of war and sacrifice, we have the opportunity to show our gratitude by serving them.

I’m proud of the team that worked with us as we completed our operations. They met each mission with energy, passion and deep devotion to our veterans.

God bless our veterans, their families, and the United States of America.



# VA UPDATES DISABILITY RATING SCHEDULE

Effective May 13, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will update portions of the [VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities \(VASRD, or rating schedule\)](#) that evaluates the organs of special sense eye conditions, as well as gynecological conditions and disorders of the breast.

The VASRD is the collection of federal regulations used by Veterans Benefits Administration claims processors to evaluate the severity of disabilities and assign disability ratings.

The VA is in the process of updating all 15 body systems of the VASRD to more accurately reflect modern medicine and provide clearer rating decisions.

“The VA remains committed to providing veterans with the benefits they have earned through their service,” said VA Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie. “And, with modern medicine advancing at a rapid rate, it’s important to ensure VA’s disability rating schedule reflects these advancements.”

## 38 CFR Book C, Schedule for Rating Disabilities

Several revisions were made to the general rating formula for diseases of the eye, including a new definition of incapacitating episodes that more clearly measures level of disability. Additionally, three diagnostic codes — diabetic retinopathy, retinal dystrophy and post-chiasmal disorders — were added. No conditions were removed from either portion of the rating schedule.

Several diagnostic codes were added to the schedule for gynecological conditions and disorders of the breast, including malignant neoplasms, benign neoplasms and other injuries of the breast. Several more diagnostic codes were restructured and revised.

Updates to dental and oral conditions and conditions related to the endocrine system were completed in 2017.

why are  
diagnostic codes  
important?

By updating these portions of the rating schedule, VA allows claims processors to make more consistent decisions with greater ease and ensure veterans understand these decisions. The VA remains committed to improving its service to veterans continuously and staying at the forefront of modern medicine.



# Mitchell Veteran's Park *Dedication*



**Saturday - May 26, 2018, at 10:30 am  
First and Main**

***Ample Seating Available.***



**Mitchell Memorial Veteran's Park  
Commemorative Coins  
will be available at the dedication.**

# SD GUARD COOKS SHOWCASE COOKING TALENT

Cpl. Michael Morgan is a former Marine who joined the South Dakota National Guard in 2011. At the time, he didn't know how to cook. To change that, he joined the 147th Forward Support Company as a culinary specialist.

A one-month course at Camp Rapid taught him the basics - how to bake, how to cook, and how to hold a knife properly for making the right cut. He learned the skills necessary to cook for soldiers.

Now Morgan is the senior cook in the 147th's kitchen, and he put seven years' experience to the test on May 5, when he and the rest of the mess team served up 100 plates of their best meals for the Philip A. Connelly Competition at the Brig. Gen. Ernie Edwards Readiness Center in Watertown.

The Connelly Competition is an annual exercise that tests Army cooks' ability to build a complete meal for dozens of soldiers in the close, cramped quarters of a containerized kitchen. It's both a challenge and a chance to cook in true-to-life deployment conditions and produce quality food for soldiers in the field.

Judges at the Connelly Competition evaluate the mess section in ten categories: sanitation, food safety, water safety, non-commissioned officer development, equipment knowledge and maintenance, presentation, portion size, temperature and taste.

One of the biggest challenges is sanitation. Keeping food clean in the field - in a pint-sized, airy mess tent - is both difficult and critically important. An unsanitary meal could have a huge impact on mission readiness.

Other challenges can quickly compound the pressure on Army cooks. With the heat generated by all the cooking, baking, grilling, frying and boiling, a containerized kitchen gets hot, fast. A particularly hot day could make life miserable for a cook. Working with sharp knives in such close quarters doesn't help, either. Everyone in the tent needs to constantly be aware of where the others are standing or moving so nobody gets hurt.

To combat the stress, the cooks play music in the kitchen. They joke around. They may sneak a dessert for themselves every now and then. But Spc. Evan Werkmeister, a culinary specialist with the 147th, said the best part is seeing the effect a well-cooked meal can have on a unit.

At its core, the competition celebrates culinary excellence through recognition of food service programs. Established March 23, 1968, it was named for the late Philip A. Connelly, former president of the International Food Service Executives Association. Kranz added that it's also an exercise in preserving the military's legacy for food service.

The 147th cooks took state honors at the competition. Next they'll represent South Dakota at the regional level. If they win there, they'll compete at the national level against the best Army cooks in the nation.





# HONORING OUR HEROES

Keith Aden, McCook County Veterans Service Officer, sets headstone for Korean War Veteran Frank Townsend who died earlier this year.

SDDVA Field Officer Michael Maske assisted Aden with setting the stone.

This is another great example of "heroes helping heroes."



# BUTTE COUNTY HONORS WWII HEROES

Butte County VSO Bob Wagner has been reaching out and recognizing World War II Veterans in Butte County. For those that weren't able to make this event, Bob presented those to them personally.



# WORLD WAR II VETERANS IN WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA HONORED

Over 200 people attended the 5th Annual World War II luncheon in Rapid City this week. Bill Casper, organizer of this great event said, "this luncheon affords WWII Veterans and their families the opportunity to network and share their war stories."

SDDVA's Secretary Larry Zimmerman and Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard presented 86 heroes from the "Greatest Generation" with South Dakota's World War II commemorative medals.



"It is, I believe, the greatest generation any society has ever produced." (Tom Brokaw)





# MICHELS PROMOTED TO BRIGADIER GENERAL

The South Dakota National Guard promoted Marshall Michels, of Rapid City, to the rank of brigadier general during a ceremony at Joint Force Headquarters on Camp Rapid, May 11.

Michels serves as the director of the joint staff and oversees joint strategic planning and training to enhance the readiness of the Army and Air Guard.

"I feel extremely blessed and humbled to receive this opportunity," said Michels. "I look forward to continuing to serve this great organization and to serve with the dedicated professionals of the South Dakota National Guard."

Guest speaker Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general for the SDNG, expressed his confidence in Michels to maintain the relationships and readiness for the SDNG.

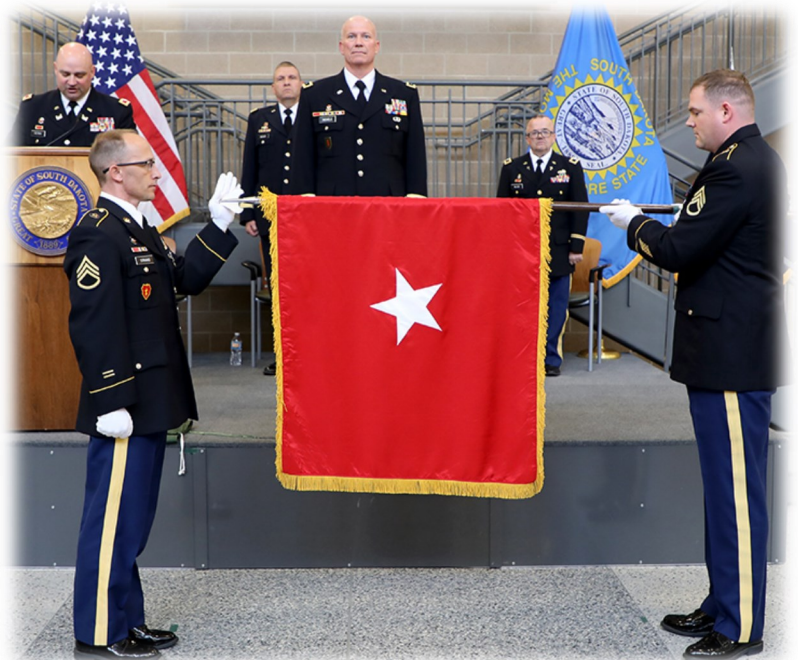
"We are extremely fortunate to have an officer with Marshall Michels' education, experience and work ethic to assume this important role in our organization," said Reisch. "His qualifications are unmatched."

Michels' service in the military spans more than 35 years. A native of Vermillion, Michels enlisted into the South Dakota Army National Guard in 1983 as a combat medic with the 730th Medical Company. In 1988, he received his commission as a second lieutenant through the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at the University of South Dakota.

Michels served over three years on active duty with the 2nd Armored Division and with the 1st Infantry Division during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

As a field artillery officer, Michels has held numerous command and staff positions to include commander, Alpha Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion; executive officer, 2-147th Field Artillery Battalion; S-3 officer, 147th Field Artillery Brigade; commander, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion; commander, 109th Regional Support Group; and chief of staff for the SDARNG.

Michels is a graduate from the University of South Dakota and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science and two Master's degrees: Business Administration from University Touro International and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College. Michels is also a graduate of the Joint Force Staff College, Advanced Joint Professional Military Education and the U.S. Air Force War College.



# VA ANNOUNCES WHOLE HEALTH FLAGSHIP SITES

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released the names of 18 facilities designated VA Whole Health Flagship Sites, which are spread around the country within the VA health-care system and are focused on empowering and equipping veterans to take charge of their health and well-being.

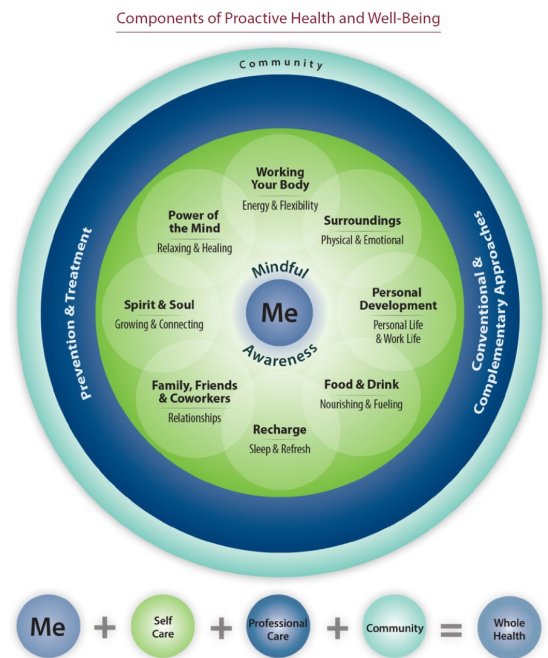
As the VA shifts from a health-care system focused primarily on treating disease to one guided by a personalized health plan that considers the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and environmental needs of veterans, the Whole Health System acknowledges that health care involves more than the physical human body.

“The VA’s Whole Health approach helps veterans live their lives to the fullest,” said VA Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie. “By developing a personal health plan that integrates many areas of their lives, veterans can truly take charge of their well being and improve their health all around. I’m pleased to recognize these VA facilities that are helping our veterans do just that.”

The following facilities have been designated Whole Health Flagship Sites:

- VA Boston Health Care System
- VA New Jersey Health Care System (East Orange )
- Erie VA Medical Center (VAMC) (Pennsylvania)
- Beckley VAMC (West Virginia)
- W. G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center (Salisbury, North Carolina)
- Atlanta VAMC
- Tampa VAMC (Florida)
- Tennessee Valley Health Care System (Nashville and Murfreesboro)
- Aleda E. Lutz VAMC (Saginaw, Michigan)
- Tomah VAMC (Wisconsin)
- St. Louis VA Health Care System (Missouri)
- Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (Little Rock)
- South Texas Veterans Health Care System (San Antonio)
- Salt Lake City VAMC
- VA Portland Health Care System (Oregon)
- Palo Alto VAMC (Livermore, California)
- Tucson VAMC (Arizona)
- VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (Omaha, Nebraska).

(continued on next page)



## VA WHOLE HEALTH (CONTINUED)

In addition to the naming of the flagship facilities, VA also announced new sites that will serve as Whole Health Design Sites beginning in 2018. VA Whole Health Design Sites listed here are focused on implementing specific elements of the Whole Health System and/or expanding their existing efforts to implement a more comprehensive Whole Health capability.

In 2018, the following facilities have been designated Whole Health Design Sites:

- Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital (Bedford, Massachusetts)
- Birmingham Alabama VAMC
- Central California VA Health Care System (Fresno)
- Cincinnati VAMC
- John D. Dingell VAMC (Detroit, Michigan)
- Fargo VA Health Care System (North, Dakota)
- Kansas City VAMC (Missouri)
- William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital (Madison, Wisconsin)
- Manchester VAMC (New Hampshire)
- Mountain Home VAMC (Tennessee)
- Royal C. Johnson Veterans Memorial Medical Center (Sioux Falls, South Dakota)
- Syracuse VAMC (New York)
- West Palm Beach VA Medical Center (Florida).

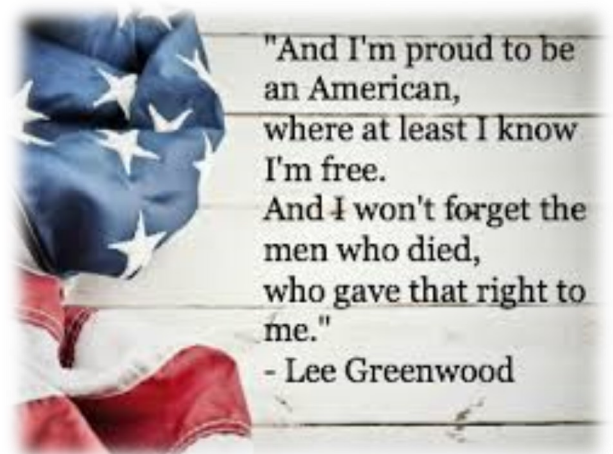


Additionally, every VAMC now offers an [Introduction to Whole Health](#) learning opportunity for transitioning service members, family members and currently enrolled Veterans. For information about the Whole Health System, flagship facilities or design sites, visit <https://www.va.gov/patientcenteredcare>.

## PREPARING TO HONOR OUR HEROES

Perhaps it is the words of Lee Greenwood that best describes the actions of Custer American Legion Post 46 and their partners - "I won't forget the men who died, who gave the right to me."

Custer Post #46 American Legion, and their partners Custer Boy Scout Troop 25, Cub Scout Pack 25, Girl Scout Troop 71110, Civil Air Patrol Crazy Horse Squadron, and Harney Peak Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, decorate over 400 veterans graves at the Custer City Cemetery in preparation for Memorial Day. Their actions benefit families and friends who can only visit their veterans' graves during the weekend before Memorial Day.





# SDDVA CLAIMS OFFICE STAFF PARTICIPATE IN VA 2K WALK

SDDVA Sioux Falls Claims Office staff participated in the 8th Annual VA 2K Walk and Roll in Sioux Falls yesterday. The Walk encourages people to live active lifestyles and allows participants to support homeless veterans through voluntary donations of cleaning supplies to give to homes veterans when they move into a home or apartment.

Kudos to the Sioux Falls team for their collection of cleaning supplies. They have been participating in this event for three years!!!!!! Even Diamond Don came out of retirement to participate!



SDDVA Staff (L to R) Erin Brown, Jerry Lemme, Krystal Taylor, Rebekah Bianas, Katherine Richardson, Joe Leasure, Michelle Henderson, Shannon Phillips and Don Thomson.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

May 17—SFVAHCS Open House - 4:00 pm—6:00 pm (CT)  
 May 19—MOPH State Convention—DAV Headquarters in Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)  
 May 19—Armed Forces Day Spring Fling—VFW Post #3442 (721 Mt Rushmore Rd) Custer (Noon—11:00 pm (MT)  
 May 22—SDDVA Mini Conference via Skype—10:00 am (CT)  
 May 24-25—PVA Disabled Veterans Fishing Tournament—Chamberlain  
 May 26—Dedication of Mitchell's Veterans Park (First and Main)—11:00 am (CT)  
 May 28—Memorial Day (Remember our Heroes) - state offices will be closed  
 Jun 6—PVA NCC Annual Picnic—Sioux Falls PVA Chapter Office—11:45 am (CT)  
 Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish  
 Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls  
 Jul 4—Independence Day  
 Jul 7—Veterans for Veterans Annual Poker Run—Mitchell Depot—1:00 pm (CT)  
 Jul 11—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)  
 Jul 12—Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Cemetery Grand Opening—Sisseton—11:00 am (CT)  
 Jul 13 —VABHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Education Classroom—Fort Meade—10:00 am (MT)  
 Jul 14—VVA SD State Council Third Quarter Meeting—Pierre Post 8 American Legion—11:00 am (CT)  
 Jul 14-17—DAV National Convention—Reno, NV  
 Jul 21-25—VFW National Convention—Kansas City, MO  
 Jul 26—VABHCS Veterans Town Hall—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre 11:00 am—4:00 pm (CT)  
 Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre  
 Aug 24-30—American Legion National Convention—Minneapolis, MN  
 Sept 14—VABHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)  
 Oct 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—Soldiers and Sailors Building—Pierre—8:00 am (CT)  
 Nov 16—VABHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)



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